NOVA SCOTIA
Health Promotion

Nova Scotia Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy
Office of Health Promotion Next Steps
April 2004

The Nova Scotia Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy was submitted to the Office of Health Promotion (OHP) and the Department of Health (DoH) in October 2003. Developed through a collaborative process involving many partners including various government departments, regional health authorities, national organizations, community groups, and others, the Strategy is intended to "guide integrated action on chronic disease" in Nova Scotia. Both the Office of Health Promotion and the Department of Health, as recipients of the Strategy, are grateful for the thoroughness of the research, the depth of the consultation, the calibre of the expertise, and the rigor of the analysis that contributed to the final document.

The Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy takes its direction and bases its actions on a well-founded population health approach to chronic disease prevention. This multi-determinant approach is aimed at maintaining and improving the health status of the population while reducing health status inequities between population groups. The five Strategic Directions of the Strategy – Leadership, Public Policy, Community Development and Infrastructure, Knowledge Development and Translation, and Health Communication – provide the framework for the Strategy's 15 objectives. The Strategy provides a framework to link and integrate strategies and initiatives in development or currently in place in Nova Scotia.

The Office of Health Promotion and the Department of Health reviewed the Strategy and identified their unique roles in relationship to chronic disease:

- the Office of Health Promotion has been designated the lead agency for leadership in chronic disease prevention in Nova Scotia, whereas
- the Department of Health has a similar and complementary role in chronic disease management.

In these leadership roles, both agencies will work with partners from many sectors to effectively address risk factors for chronic disease (tobacco use, unhealthy eating, physical inactivity, etc.) and support new approaches to the management of chronic disease.

The Strategy, while comprehensive, also has substantial resource implications. While the Office of Health Promotion supports the intent of the Strategy, fiscal reality requires that the Strategy be implemented incrementally, as resources allow. As we move forward, on-going discussions with stakeholders will assist in determining implementation and integration opportunities.

LEADERSHIP
Provide the governance, administrative, financial and human resources necessary to sustain effective chronic disease prevention.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 1***
Create a governance mechanism through which organizations and stakeholders exercise joint ownership and shared accountability for their collective efforts in chronic disease prevention.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 2***
Define roles for all partners involved in chronic disease prevention in Nova Scotia.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 3***
Ensure adequate physical, organizational, financial and human resources are in place to support chronic disease prevention.

The Office of Health Promotion recognizes that the mandate of addressing chronic disease is "bigger" than a single agency: chronic disease prevention requires the collective knowledge, expertise and contribution of partners. An integrated approach to chronic disease prevention requires leadership. The governance structure outlined in the Strategy identifies the establishment of a separate Centre for Chronic Disease Prevention (reporting to the Office of Health Promotion) to provide this leadership. Given the current fiscal reality, a separate arms-length structure is not an option at this time. Leadership for the Strategy will be provided by the Office of Health Promotion. As suggested, an Advisory Committee will be created as a mechanism through which organizations and stakeholders advise the CEO and the Minister of Health Promotion on strategies and actions relating to chronic disease prevention.

Although many organizations are already supporting chronic disease prevention initiatives through physical, organizational, financial and human resources, additional resources are required. The Office of Health Promotion has earmarked resources for several important initiatives which address the major risk factors for chronic disease - physical inactivity, smoking, unhealthy eating – and recognize additional resources are required over time.

PUBLIC POLICY
Establish and implement a provincial public policy framework based on the Nova Scotia Health Goals that supports integrated chronic disease prevention.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 4***
Ensure there are processes and supports implemented at all levels of government that support implementation of healthy public policy.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 5***
Ensure active involvement of the citizens of Nova Scotia in the process of developing and implementing public health policy.

The Office of Health Promotion promotes the development of healthy public policy at all levels, from working with community organizations through to participation on senior government committees, as a means of reducing risk factors for chronic disease and promoting healthy living practices.

Within government, the Cabinet and the Deputy Ministers of Social Policy Committee are mechanisms through which the Office of Health Promotion and its partners can influence the policy and business planning of government departments and the Treasury and Policy Board. These structures provide opportunities for intersectoral policy development, collaborative program planning, and the use of health impact assessment tools for a broad range of government policy decisions.

Within communities, many community groups and NGO groups are already developing/contributing toward the development of healthy public policy. The Advisory Committee, Community Health Boards, and many other stakeholder consultations and collaborations, will provide opportunities to improve the participation of Nova Scotians in healthy public policy development. Facilitating the work of these groups through collaboration will contribute to the development of healthy public policy.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Ensure an appropriate service system infrastructure and community capacity to plan, deliver and sustain effective interventions to prevent chronic disease and achieve equity in health.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 6***
Ensure and/or develop resources to support chronic disease prevention and allocate them strategically.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 7***
Build and strengthen organizational support and leadership for integrated health promotion and chronic disease prevention within provider agencies.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 8***
Develop the health promotion skills and knowledge of the workforce and volunteers to support integrated chronic disease prevention.

While leadership of a coordinated provincial approach to chronic disease prevention resides with the Office of Health Promotion, local resources are required for implementation of many aspects of the strategy. Effective chronic disease prevention will require strong organizational support to develop and strengthen the skills of health promotion service providers. We recognize that strong leaders and champions for chronic disease prevention currently exist within the community, health advocacy organizations, and in service provider agencies. It is important that these valuable resources for health promotion be supported through organizational processes. In addition, organizations should be encouraged to liaise and partner with other provincial, regional and local experts in the area of chronic disease prevention.

The Advisory Committee will play an important role in leading and championing health promotion and disease prevention strategies, and the Office of Health Promotion will continue to work with partners to advocate for increased funding to support the infrastructure, capacity and required skills.

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSLATION
Develop and facilitate access to research, evidence and knowledge to inform policy, programs and practices for chronic disease prevention and health promotion.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 9***
Establish an integrated surveillance system to monitor and assess chronic disease mortality and morbidity, and the level of exposure to risk factors and their determinants in the population.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 10***
Develop and implement a strategic research agenda to engage researchers, institutions and agencies working collaboratively to address gaps in knowledge of chronic disease and underlying determinants.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 11***
Develop incentives, infrastructure, and capacity within communities, organizations and systems to conduct process and outcome evaluations of chronic disease prevention initiatives.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 12***
Create mechanisms which enable surveillance information, evaluation findings, and research to contribute to policy-making, advocacy, and program planning and implementation.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 13***
Evaluate the Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy.

The Strategy supports an evidence-based approach to public policy decision-making. This approach requires resources for an integrated and technologically supported approach to surveillance, a strategic research agenda, and on-going evaluation of the Strategy. To ensure a consistent and effective approach to surveillance, research, and evaluation, it is necessary to work with public health partners at the federal, provincial and DHA levels.

The strategic research agenda will be aimed at identifying determinants, reducing risk factors, and improving the effectiveness of chronic disease prevention strategies. The uptake of research findings to policy decision-making is a key determinant for successful chronic disease prevention. Therefore, opportunities for collaboration and knowledge transfer among field staff, policy makers and university-based partners to support the development and utilization of policy-relevant and peer-reviewed research will be explored. This work will be achieved in collaboration with research funding bodies (such as the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research).

In addition, collaboration among partners at all levels will be encouraged in the development of an evaluation framework (including indicators and measurement approaches) to evaluate the success of various approaches to chronic disease prevention. Evaluation initiatives will build upon evaluation approaches already in progress and leverage existing skills and resources to support new evaluation approaches.

HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS
Develop and implement communications and social marketing strategies that support chronic disease prevention.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 14***
Support local organizations and stakeholders in effective use of communications for integrated chronic disease prevention.

❖ ***Strategic Objective 15***
Implement provincial mass and multi-media campaigns to promote healthy environments and behaviours.

Media campaigns, printed literature, and other communication tools are part of a comprehensive health promotion campaign that supports healthy public policy development, supporting community initiatives, and creating healthy physical environments. Working with partners in health, social services, recreation sectors and others, the health promotion campaign will address health status improvement strategies, risks to health, and approaches to chronic disease prevention. A strong and effective "healthy Nova Scotia" brand will be used by a broad range of partners to help to motivate Nova Scotians to improve their personal health, thereby reducing the provincial incidence and burden of chronic disease.